HOMEFRONT

A BORN LEADER

Not one to sit still. Tom Lopez reaches out to community

By LESLEY LAYTON TARPINIAN

ll his life, Tom Lopez has been a leader.

Born to Ines and Isaac Lopez in McNeil in 1927, he is the eldest of 10 children. He was the first Hispanic male to graduate from Round Rock High School; he has been a city cour cilman; and he has participated in civic organizations, city boards, church and coached Little League

And, he always has taken that role

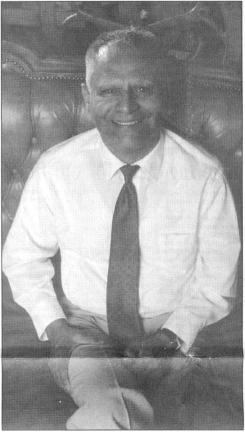
as a leader seriously.
"I was one of those that like to get involved," he said. "I had a job, but still I wanted to do more for the com

inity." That dedication earned him a 1997 Local Legend Award, presented by the Round Rock Historic Preservation Commission at the Jan. 23 city council meeting. Also receiving es and recognition that day were Harriet Rutland, who has helped preserve the city's history, and Pete Correa, who also has served on the city council.

Local Legend Awards have been presented annually for six years. According to Historic Preservation Commission Chairman Bob Brinkman, they honor and thank people who have lived here for a long time, have been involved in commu-nity service and unsung heroes — "citizens with positive and lasting impact" and who "exemplify the very essence of Round Rock."

"Just community service — a long-time familiar face" is how Lopez exemplified those qualifications. Brinkman said.

"To me, I feel very proud to receive this honor and being recognized as one of the local, local people who have been real active in serving the community," Lopez said. "It's some-thing to be proud of."



Tensy Magest Vilender Size

Tom Lopez is the first-born of 10 children. He also has been a leader as the first Hispanic male to graduate from Round Rock High School, in the military and throughout the Round Rock community.

Previous recipients have included educators Xenia Voigt and Noel Grisham, David Carlin Sr. and the Old Settlers Association.

Lopez has encountered some leaders of his own, with his parents definitely being a big influence. But they weren't the only ones — his teachers and school administrators "would sit and talk to me and give me encour

That encouragement helped him

to continue past the sixth grade at the one-room McNeil School and finish his schooling at the middle and high schools in Round Rock.

"It was difficult when I first came here," he said, adding that at the McNeil School, students weren't taught at the same pace and he had to catch up. For that reason, most other students who moved didn't grasp enough. This meant he was the second Hispanic student to graduate from Round Rock High School, with

LOCAL

LOCAL LEGEND AWARDS

The Round Rock Historic Preservation Commission created the Local Legend Award in 1990, announcing the first recipients in 1991. The program rec-ognizes citizens who have had a positive and lasting impact on the culture, development and history of Round Rock, and who exemplify the very essence of the community.

Nominations are accepted year round. To nominate a Local Legend, send the person's name, address, phone number, if available, and a brief description of the person and his/her achievements to:

The Historic Preservation Commission c/o The Department of Planning and Community Development 221 E. Main St.

Round Rock, Texas 78664.

The nominator's name is kept confidential.

Recipients can be individuals or groups who have played an important, if

not always prominent, role in the city's history.
Previous recipients include the Rev. Oliver Berglund; Mack and Lorenzo
Rubio; the Domino Players; Genoveva Rendon; Billie Sue Henna; and
Rudolph Pettersen and D.F. Perry, whose awards were given posthumously.

the first one a female student who graduated two or three years ahead

He earned his diploma with the port of his father. "He made sure I was schooled. I stayed in school," Lopez said. "With

his efforts, I kept on "I was glad to get the diploma," he

added His brothers and sisters followed

in those same footsteps. After graduating, he married Linda Molina in 1949 at St. William's Catholic Church. Together, they raised three daughters — Gloria, Anita and Sophia — and one son

Carlos Shortly after their marriage Lopez enlisted in the U.S. Air Force. When he retired, he had risen to the

rank of master sergeant. "It was great," he said. "You stay

20 years, you gotta like it." Through the course of those 20 vears, he was stationed in San Antonio, Alabama, Greece, Gerr Saudi Arabia and Taiwan. He also

flew into Turkey, Iran, France, Spain, England, Italy, Vietnam, the Philippines, Japan and Korea. But

he never forgot where he came from: "I always considered this my home." After leaving the military in 1968

and moving to San Antonio, Lopez thought he might like a federal job similar to ones which his sisters had. So he moved back to Round Rock in 1970 and became a tax examiner for the IRS accounting branch in Austin He retired from his second career 19 years later.

In that period, he became very active in Round Rock, serving three terms on the city council, which he left in 1980.

He served the city during a period of large growth, which was strain Round Rock's water supply. "We were going dry," he said

He said the city worked with the Brazos River Authority to get water from the lake in Georgetown

"So, it was a start, and that's how Round Rock was able to manage growth," Lopez said.
Other accomplishments while he

was on the council include paying the streets in the The Flats, at no cost to homeowners, through the use of grant and city money, and drainage

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Legend: Described as willing to give to others

His civic involvement doesn't stop there. Lopez also has served on the Round Rock Recreation Board, the Community Services Council, El Amistad Club and American Legion Post No. 447, Plus, at St. William's he was an usher and participated in

fundraisers Though Lopez has retired twice, that doesn't mean he has quit working. In fact, he has taken advantage of retirement to open new doors.

And the latest door he has opened is with the Round Rock ISD, for which he started working six years ago as a migrant recruiter. He matched families with a feder-ally funded program to assist migrant children with clothing, medical and dental care, and helping to keep students in school until they graduate.

His present position with the RRISD is as a lunchroom monitor at Bluebonnet Elementary.

"I want to keep active," he said.

One life-long Round Rock resident who has watched Lopez stay active is Mario Carlin, who himself stays active with the Historic Preservation Commission, the Lions Club, Knights of Columbus, Sertoma and El Amistad. Carlin is the grandson of previous Local Legend recipient David Car-

"I've known Tom all my life," said Carlin, 24, adding he's been a good role model. The qualities that Carlin uses to

describe Lopez include very honest, loyal and hardworking.

"He's always willing to give up his tim really willing to give to others," he said,

adding Lopez speaks from experience.
"He has a lot of words of wisdom and couragement," Carlin said.

Maybe Lopez is a victim of some of the progress and growth that he was able to bring to Round Rock. In November, he and his wife moved to Taylor because he wanted to get away from the traffic. But, his heart

"I miss the people that I know," he said, adding he still comes back to Round Rock to keep up with El Amistad and the American

"I haven't left it completely."